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In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

Birthdays of Good Men and Women.

'Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.'—Pr 31²⁹.

ON the 12th of May 1820, there was a little girl born at Florence in Italy. She was named after her birthplace. Her family name was a very unusual one; it was *Nightingale*, so the little girl became known to the world as Florence Nightingale. Her parents had a lovely country home in England, and as a child Florence learned to love flowers, birds, and beasts. But she loved babies most of all, and was always greatly concerned when she heard of any baby she knew being sick.

She had quite a number of dolls to play with. Sometimes she imagined herself their doctor, sometimes their nurse. She bandaged the broken ones, and wrote out prescriptions for those who lay sick in bed. The very earliest piece of her hand-writing which has been preserved is a doll's prescription written in a very childish hand, '16 grains for an old woman, 11 for a young woman, and 7 for a child.'

Florence was a very serious little girl. She reminds one somewhat of Joan of Arc. When she was in her sixth year she believed that God spoke to her, and told her that she had special work to do for Him. Again and again the call came to her. Long afterwards when she wrote down some facts about her early life she said that 'God called her to His service on February 7, 1837.' She was seventeen then. It was like telling the story of her conversion. 'My idea of Heaven,' she wrote later, 'is when my dear Aunt Hannah and I and my boy Shore¹ and all of us shall be together, nursing the sick people who are left behind, and giving each other sympathies beside, and our Saviour in the midst of us, giving us strength.'²

But she wisely laid her plans for living for a while on this earth and trying to make a heaven of it. And it was not easy. Her father and mother had a prejudice against the profession of nursing; they disliked the idea of their daughter taking it up. They thought that in doing it she

¹ A relative.

² E. T. Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale*, i. 44.

would meet a great many things to make her unhappy. The nurses of those days were, with few exceptions, very unlike the kind women who nursed our boys on the battlefield. They were not gentle. So many of them indeed were rough, and careless of their patients, that the name of 'Sarah Gamp,' of whom many of you must have heard, became proverbial. Florence Nightingale loved her father and mother, but nothing would induce her to give up the ideal that God had set before her.

If beautiful surroundings could have brought happiness, she had these at her own home. She loved painting and sculpture. Her money enabled her to visit the greatest Picture Galleries and see the finest examples of Sculpture in the world; these, however, but brought her a clearer revelation of God's will, and she became firmer than ever in her determination to fulfil what she believed to be His commands. About 1849, when the French troops besieged Rome on behalf of the Pope, who had fled, she happened to be in Italy. Every one was saying how careless it was for the Romans to expose their beautiful monuments and buildings to the assaults of the enemy. Florence Nightingale showed herself a woman inspired by the same spirit that sent our noble young soldiers to fight in the Great War, ready to face the loss of everything in their determination that wrong should not prevail. 'They must carry out their defence to the last,' she cried. 'I should like to see them fight the streets inch by inch till the last man dies at his barricade, till St. Peter's is level with the ground, till the Vatican is blown into the air. . . . If I were in Rome, I should be the first to fire the Sistine Chapel, and Michael Angelo would cry "Well done!" as he saw his work destroyed.'

Florence Nightingale was a heroine. She could never turn back. 'O God,' she wrote in her diary, 'Thou puttest into my heart this great desire to devote myself to the sick and sorrowful. I offer it to Thee. Do with it what is for Thy service.' And although she craved for the sympathy of her mother and sister, a verse from the New Testament made her way plain, 'He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me.'

She went and had a period of training on the

Continent, then on her return she became superintendent of a nursing home for governesses in London. But the chance of her life came when, after the battle of Alma, news reached this country that no proper preparations had been made for the treatment of the sick and wounded. There were no bandages, no nursing appliances for even the commonest surgical operations. In some cases, even a week might pass before medical attendance was procured for the poor sufferers. Florence Nightingale offered to go to the Crimea to nurse the men; she offered also to find a party of nurses who would accompany her. Her ability was well known: her offer was accepted, and she went. Many messages came to her before she set out. 'God speed you on your errand of mercy, my own dearest child.' 'God bless you, my dear friend, wherever you go.' It was not easy work she had undertaken. The nurses under her were difficult; they did not understand obedience as it is understood in the army, as our brave army nurses did.

The story of her work at Scutari reveals her as a queen among nurses. She had a will of iron, but a tender heart of love. The men regarded her with reverence. 'Before she came,' said one soldier's letter, 'there was cussin' and swearin', but after that it was holy as a church.' Some of them idolized her. They kissed her shadow as she passed carrying her little lamp, and they saluted her as she walked down their wounded ranks. 'If the Queen came for to die,' said a soldier who lost a leg at the Alma, 'they ought to make her queen, and I think they would.' An Irish clergyman was asked to what sect she belonged. 'She belonged to a sect which unfortunately is a very rare one—the sect of the Good Samaritan.'

Florence Nightingale felt that her first duty was to God. Her aim was to leave the world better than she found it. And that, I hope, will be your aim also. Are your schoolmates better for knowing you? When they part from you, will they remember that you were strong for the right, but gentle and kind if they happened to be in trouble?

The following beautiful incident was recorded in a London paper of August 16, 1910:

At Chelsea, under the lime tree's stir,
I read the news to a pensioner
That a noble lord and a judge were dead—
'They were younger men than me,' he said.

I read again of another death;
The old man turned, and caught his breath—
'She's gone?' he said; 'she too? In camp
We called her the Lady of the Lamp.'

He would not listen to what I read,
But wanted it certain—'The Lady's dead?'
I showed it him to remove his doubt,
And added, unthinking, 'The Lamp is out.'

He rose—and I had to help him stand—
Then, as he saluted with trembling hand,
I was abashed to hear him say,
'The Lamp she lit is alight to-day.'¹

A False and a True Measure.

'But they themselves, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding.'—2 Co 10¹².

I wonder how many of you get measured regularly by your father or mother. Are you ever made to take off your shoes and stand very straight and erect with your back against a door while a book is laid on the top of your head and a little pencil mark is put on the door underneath the book?

I once knew a family of four children who used to be measured like that every three months or so. The marks were made on the inside of a big cupboard door in the schoolroom, and the name of each child and the date was written alongside like this: Mabel, 1st March 1911; Margaret, 4th June 1912; Norah, 2nd September 1912; Jim, 1st December 1913.

Each time they were measured the younger ones used to count back to see how much bigger or smaller they were than the older ones at the same age. Mabel, the eldest, was very tall and nobody could ever beat her, and poor little Jim who was the youngest was also the smallest for his age. He never seemed to manage to be as big as any of his sisters had been at his age, but I can remember his glee when one day he came and told me that at last he was *really and truly* a quarter of an inch taller than Margaret had been when she was seven.

These children were 'measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves,' and I think that kind of measuring is very interesting and harmless. But there is another

¹ A. Matheson, *Florence Nightingale*, 358.

kind of measuring that is not quite so good, and it was this measuring and comparing that St. Paul meant when he wrote this letter to the Corinthian Church. There was a little set in the Church at Corinth who thought their way of doing things was the only right way. They measured themselves by themselves, instead of measuring themselves by something much higher or nobler, and so they never grew any better or wiser. They had a false measure and it led them to become proud, and self-satisfied, and overbearing.

Now we are all in danger of making the same mistake, and so I want to speak to you about the False Measure, and after we have finished talking about that, I want to tell you about the True Measure.

1. The false way of measuring is to measure ourselves by ourselves. And the reason why it is false is that none of us are perfect.

Once upon a time there was a gentleman who owned a beautiful Chinese plaque. It was ornamented with all sorts of queer dragons, and he valued it very highly. But one day the plaque fell from the wall where it was hanging and it broke in two right down the middle. Some time after, this gentleman had a chance of sending the plaque out to China and of ordering six more. In order that they might be exactly like the broken one, he packed the two bits of it very carefully and sent them out as a copy. A few months later a box arrived from China containing the plaques. Very eagerly he unpacked it, and what do you think he saw? Six plaques exactly the same size as his own one; ornamenting them, exactly the same dragons in exactly the same colours; and down the centre of each plaque—a crack exactly like the break down the middle of the original!

That makes you laugh, but do you know that you are just as silly when you copy the mistakes in other people's characters? So don't do wrong things just because others are doing them, don't measure your conscience by theirs.

2. Just a few words about the True Measure. If we are not to compare ourselves with ourselves, with whom are we to compare ourselves? Well, God has given us a Perfect Example, a True Measure to guide us. He sent Jesus down to earth to show us how we should live, and if we measure ourselves by Him we can never make any mistake.

There is an ancient legend which tells of a wonderful statue of Christ. This statue seemed to be the height of an ordinary man, but whoever measured himself with it always found it just a little taller than himself.

Jesus is above us all because He wants to lift us up. If we keep looking up to Him and trying to imitate Him we shall grow better and braver and kinder, but if we never try to rise above the earthly standard, the chances are that we shall get less noble and brave and good as the years go on.

Once a lady missionary took a little Hindoo orphan boy to live with her. She taught him about Jesus, and one night when he was six years old she told him he might pray a prayer of his own. What do you think he said? 'Dear Jesus, make me like what you were when you were six years old.' Jesus came to earth to show not only men and women, but also boys and girls, how they should live. We are apt to think of Him as a grown man doing kind deeds and speaking wise words, but He was once just as old as you are. And I think none of the boys and girls could pray a better prayer than just this: 'Dear Jesus, make me like what you were when you were my age.'

The One Thing Needful.

'But one thing is needful.'—Lk 10⁴².

You all know what it is to have special friends. You know how you love to go and see them, and how happy you are when they come to visit you. And you have heard father and mother talking about *their* special friends, and saying how nice it was to have So-and-so 'dropping in' of an evening.

Now Christ had special friends too when He lived on earth. There was one house where He knew He could go at any moment and find a welcome. It was the house of two sisters called Martha and Mary. We are told that Jesus loved Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus. They lived at Bethany, a little village about half an hour's walk from Jerusalem. And in the cool of the evening, after Christ's day's work of preaching and healing was done, He would often walk out to Bethany to refresh Himself by a talk with His friends.

On the evening of which our text tells Jesus had perhaps taken a few of His disciples with Him, for, when He arrived, there arose a great

bustle in the house. Martha, who prided herself on her housekeeping and her cooking, began to rush here and there and to prepare a great spread in honour of her guests. It was very kind of her, but she did not understand, even although she loved Jesus dearly, that it was not fine food He was hungering for. She never saw that it was the love and sympathy of His friends that He was craving.

But her sister Mary saw. She loved Jesus in a more understanding way than did Martha. She loved Him in a more understanding way than did even His disciples who were with Him all the time. She saw how He was longing for sympathy and friendship, so she sat down at His feet (as the Jews did at the feet of their Rabbis or teachers), and she listened to Him and talked to Him of the things that matter most in the world—God's love for men, and men's love for God, and how loving God we love men, and loving men we love God. And perhaps Jesus told her how He had come to show men what God is like, so that it might be easier for men to love God.

In any case, Mary got so absorbed listening and talking to Christ that she was deaf to all the clatter and fuss that Martha was making. She never noticed how hot and tired and cross her sister was growing. But Martha was not too busy to notice Mary. Each time she flew into the room and noisily set extra dishes on the table, she gave a look at Mary sitting at the Master's feet; and each time her wrath grew hotter till at last it boiled over. She bustled up and said sharply to Jesus, 'You don't seem to care how busy I am. Don't you see that Mary should be helping me instead of sitting there doing nothing?'

Jesus looked at poor angry Martha, and then He smiled and shook His head. 'Martha, Martha,' said He gently, 'I'm afraid you are worrying yourself unnecessarily cooking extra dainties for me. Don't you know that I'd rather just share your usual meal? There is no need to make a feast. One dish is quite enough. Did I say one dish?—Ah, Martha, don't you see that the one thing I want most in the world is not food but the thing that Mary is offering me—a loving and understanding heart?'

Boys and girls, Christ still comes to visit His friends. He comes to our heart as our guest any day. What do we offer Him? Do we think it

necessary to make a great fuss before we can entertain Him? Do we think we must bring Him this thing or that?

There is only one thing He asks for. It is the thing that Mary gave Him long ago, the welcome of a loving and an understanding heart.

'I wish everybody saw me with Grandpapa's eyes,' sighed a little maiden when some one found fault with her. Grandpapa's eyes were the understanding eyes of love. Let us try to see Jesus with Mary's eyes, then perhaps we shall be worthy of the friendship and the comradeship He offers each one of us.

The Christian Year.

THE SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION.

All with One Accord.

'And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.'—Acts 2¹.

Human progress, real, persistent, human progress, depends upon the breeze from heaven. That is the first truth emphasized. When the day of Pentecost was fully come they were all with one accord in one place. They had done nothing as far as aggression and organization were concerned. They had not ventured outside the limits of Jerusalem. The great world lay there around them, ready for their attack, and still they tarried and tarried in Jerusalem. Their vessel was in the harbour, and they dare not venture out to sea until they got the heavenly breezes that had been promised them.

1. Who are included in the comprehensive word 'all'? Many of them are named in the previous chapter. We find the old familiar names representing the familiar presences of Peter, James, and John, Andrew and Philip and Thomas. 'With the women.' The Magdalene was there! 'And Mary the mother of Jesus.' This is the last mention of her in the sacred story; the record leaves her praying! 'With his brethren.' How revolutionary is the statement. We think of another sentence descriptive of the brethren in an earlier day: 'Even his brethren did not believe on him!' And yet here they are, with their unbelief banished, and humbled into a quiet and yet fervent expectancy.

2. 'These all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer.' It was not yet that unity which they afterwards had when knit together by the Holy

Ghost. It was like the unity of people bound together by common feelings or common objects and dangers. They were gathered together in the expectation of a blessing. The promise of a Comforter had been given to all. The words of Christ had been addressed to the apostles collectively, and in a body they waited for the gift.

God has said to us, 'Wheresoever two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst.' If we were more like these apostles in uniting, and not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, who knows what glorious blessings we might have from heaven? The ten days that intervened between the Ascension and the fulfilment of the Saviour's promise were days, no doubt, full of trial. Christ had gone, and as each day passed no sign of coming aid was seen. Still they prayed and waited with submissive wills, because their hearts were full of faith.

3. There is a mystic commerce altogether independent of human expedient or arrangement. We cannot bow together without some exchange of heavenly merchandise, without angel-ministries carrying from island to island the unique and peculiar products of their climes. The rich and enriching history of the Society of Friends is altogether corroborated of this great truth of spiritual experience. 'When I came into the silent assemblies of God's people,' says Robert Barclay, 'I felt a sweet power among them which touched my heart, and as I gave way unto it, I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up.' But the human side of the apostolic *koinonia* includes riches other than these. It is not only a mystic interchange in the awful depths of the spirit; it is a fellowship of intelligence, it is a community of experience, it is the socializing of the individual testimony and witness. It is not only the subtle carriage of spiritual energy, it is the transference of visions, the sharing of discoveries, the assemblage of many judgments, whether in the hour of triumph or of defeat.

What a prayer-meeting it must have been! Who has not cherished the wish that some of these prayers had been preserved? We should all have rejoiced to know how Thomas prayed. What a strength there must have been in the prayers of a man who had wrestled long and slain his doubts! What passion there must have been in Peter's intercession! How deep and grave and quiet must have been the love in the pleas of the Magdalene! And how sweet and reverent must have been the serenity of 'Mary the mother of Jesus.' And what would they all pray for?

Surely they would concentrate upon the promised power. They had recently heard the Master Himself say, 'Ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you.' And so they just opened out their hearts and their minds in the posture of receptiveness, and they helped to foster in one another the hungry disposition. And is it not very likely that one day, in the very midst of their devotions, Mary the mother of Jesus would repeat a word which she had spoken to them on an earlier day, 'Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it?' But to-day there would be an infinitely more willing obedience than in the days when the discipleship began. Mary had no sooner repeated the words than the heart of every suppliant was prostrate in willing surrender. No command had yet been given! They were not yet called upon for the acts, but for the attitude of consecration. 'Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it!' And their hearts were bowed in homage. Here, then, was this assembly, one in purpose, steadfast in prayer, and bowed in the very posture of consecration. 'All things are now ready.'¹

WHITSUNDAY.

The Symbol of the Wind.

'And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.'—Acts 2².

1. At Pentecost a new and strange thing happened to this company of Jesus' disciples. There came to them suddenly, to all of them, a vivid sense of their Master's presence—an unseen power within them, laying hold of their spirits. It affected the whole gathering in that place and showed itself in strange fashion. 'There came from heaven' (that was the Spirit-source from which it really sprang) 'a sound (or sigh) as of a great rushing wind.' This sound pervaded the assembly, as if it were an escaping of their pent-up spiritual emotions.

2. It was a supernatural moment in the Upper Room. The powers of a new life, the forces of a new kingdom, were coming into operation, and, as the result, manifestations that never since have been experienced found place among men. We can find a parallel to what then happened in scientific investigations. Geologists and astronomers push back the beginning of the world and of the universe at large to a vast distance, but they all acknowledge that there must have been a period when phenomena were manifested, powers and forces called into operation, of which men have now no experience. The beginning, or the repeated beginnings, of the various epochs must have been times of marvels, which men can now

¹ J. H. Jowett, in *The Examiner*, January 26, 1905.

only dream about. Pentecost was for the Christian with a sense of the awful importance of life and of time and of the individual soul a far greater beginning and a grander epoch than any mere material one. It was the beginning of the spiritual life, the inauguration of the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah, the Lord and Ruler of the material universe; and therefore we ought to expect, or at least not to be surprised, that marvellous phenomena, signs and wonders, even of a physical type, should accompany and celebrate the scene. The marvels of the story told in the first chapter of Genesis find a parallel in the marvels told in the second chapter of Acts. The one passage sets forth the foundation of the material universe, the other proclaims the nobler foundations of the spiritual universe.

3. There are two ways of describing an event, one statistical and the other symbolical. They are as different as photography is different from painting. The statistical narrative gives us the plain facts as they would have been reflected in a mirror, had one been hanging on the wall. The symbolical narrative gives us the facts interpreted, and to them adds still other facts of an intangible and spiritual sort, such as no looking-glass has ever seen, and for which there is no descriptive language except such as is used by poets and artists.

That which happened at Pentecost was too great to be put into the common phrases of matter-of-fact narration. To say simply that, being there assembled and praying, the hearts of the disciples were suddenly and wonderfully affected with an unusual sense of the presence of God, was not enough. The historian becomes a poet. The winds blow and the fires blaze. The duller reader perceives that something extraordinary is taking place. That is the effect which the writer intends to produce.

And the symbol of the wind is but the putting into picturesque form of the idea that lies in the name. 'Spirit' is 'breath.' Wind is but air in motion. Breath is the synonym for life. 'Spirit' and 'life' are two words for one thing. So then, in the symbol, the 'rushing mighty wind,' we have set forth the highest work of the Spirit—the communication of a new and supernatural life.

We are carried back to that grand vision of the prophet who saw the bones lying, very many and very dry, sapless and disintegrated, a heap dead and ready to rot. The

question comes to him: 'Son of man! Can these bones live?' The only possible answer, if he consult experience, is 'O Lord God! Thou knowest.' Then follows the great invocation: 'Come from the four winds, O Breath! and breathe upon these slain that they may live.' And the Breath comes, and 'they stand up, an exceeding great army.' 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth.' The Scripture treats us all as dead, being separated from God, unless we are united to Him by faith in Jesus Christ. According to the saying of the Evangelist, 'They which believe on Him receive' the Spirit, and thereby receive the life which He gives, or, as our Lord Himself speaks, are 'born of the Spirit.' The highest and most characteristic office of the Spirit of God is to enkindle this new life, and hence His noblest name, among the many by which He is called, is the Spirit of life.¹

4. The disciples experienced a new atmosphere. When the Holy Spirit comes it is like that in the soul. The wind that blows across the earth is full of vitalizing strength. It is glorious to walk bare-headed in the wind! And to expose the 'naked spirit' to the mighty wind of God's Spirit is to have all the drowsiness driven out of the soul, and to be aroused into newness and freshness of life. The will is braced, and so is the conscience, and so are the affections, and so is the perception of God, the grip of the Infinite. However deep the sleep may be, however inveterate the drowsiness, they are not unmovable. It is a 'mighty wind,' and nothing can resist it.

Mony a win' there has been sent
 Oot aneth the firmament—
 Ilka ane its story has;
 Ilka ane began an' was;
 Ilka ane fell quiet an' mute
 Whan its angel wark was oot:
 First gaed ane oot thro' the mirk
 Whan the maker gan to work;
 Ower it gaed an' ower the sea,
 An' the warl begud to be.
 Mony ane has come an' gane
 Sin' the time there was but ane:
 Ane was grit an' strang, an' rent
 Rocks an' muntains as it went
 Afore the Lord, his trumpeter,
 Waukin up the prophet's ear;
 Ane was like a stepping soun
 I' the mulberry taps abune—
 Them the Lord's ain steps did swing,
 Walkin on afore his king;
 Ane comes frae his hert to mine
 Ilka day to mak it fine.
 Breath o' God, eh! come an' blaw
 Frae my hert ilk fog awa;

¹ A. Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scriptures*, Acts i.-xii. 48.

Wauk me up an' mak me strang,
 Fill my hert wi' mony a sang,
 Frae my lips again to stert
 Fillin sails o' mony a hert,
 Blawin them ower seas dividin
 To the only place to bide in.¹

TRINITY SUNDAY.

The Holy Spirit.

'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'—Acts 2³⁸.

The history of the introduction of a new spiritual era is always full of interest and fascination, and, above all, the introduction of that greatest change of all, when the kingdom of God became established through the incarnation of God upon this earth. Then there came into the world, in as far as anything could be new, new ideas, new forces, new facts, new conceptions, new motives, and new incentives to action. Human life was revolutionized by the coming of the Son of Man. So the history of the New Testament, for every inquiring and devout mind, is one of surpassing interest. A new heaven and a new earth are being created, and it is a matter of infinite interest to notice how it relates itself to the old world that is passing away.

1. He errs greatly who thinks that the Christian religion stops with the resurrection. There was a time when the disciples supposed that it stopped there. When Jesus passed into the cloud which received Him from human sight, His disciples stood rooted to the ground gazing steadfastly into the heavens into which their Master had gone. And while they stood there they received this reprimand from two men robed in white, 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus which is taken from you into heaven shall come again.'

The end of life, according to Jesus, is not a thought, but an action. The supreme thing is not information, but conduct. The most urgent and critical question which we have to face is not any question of Biblical criticism or Christian philosophy, but, can a man in the first decade of the twentieth century live the Christ life? and can a man here and now do the work which God would have him do? All other questions sink into insignificance compared with this one. Is it possible for a man at all times and in all circumstances to live a life which shall be well pleasing to God? But before the question has left our lips, the Christian religion

throws back the full-toned, jubilant answer, 'Yes.' And if we ask, How is this great thing possible? she immediately replies, 'By the power of the Holy Spirit.'²

2. No writer in the New Testament emphasizes the personality of the Holy Spirit as Luke does. In the Gospels, when Matthew says, 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them who ask him,' Luke prefers to summarize all other good gifts in the greatest gift of God to man, and he says, 'Your heavenly Father' will 'give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.' The Holy Spirit is the best of all 'good things' in Luke's estimation; and his second volume is a prolonged proof of the justification of this standpoint. We never would have known about the baptism at Pentecost, if Luke had not written this history; for no other book in the New Testament makes mention of it. The baptism with the Spirit marked the beginning of the new dispensation, a dispensation which has had no end as yet.

3. There is no article in the Christian creed which it is more difficult to deal with, and concerning which more perplexing and unanswerable questions rise than just that little article which is repeated so easily, and, perhaps, so thoughtlessly, 'I believe in the Holy Spirit.' Whenever we begin to think about this subject, we enter the realm of mystery, and Jesus acknowledged all this in His conversation with Nicodemus. Before he talked long with the citizen of Jerusalem, Nicodemus began to use the great adverb 'how,' a word which springs spontaneously to the lips of every man who thinks. And Jesus at once informed him that there was no answer to his question. Certain things are simply because they are. They are not to be philosophized about until they have been acted on. A man must be born of the Spirit. If you ask the question, How? the answer is, He must be born of the Spirit. If you say it is a mystery, the answer is, You speak truly, but the world is full of mystery. Even such a common thing as the wind is a mystery. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.'

But while we move amid great mysteries there are certain things clear as the sun at noon. God

¹ George MacDonald, 'Win' that blows' (*Works*, ii. 410).

² C. E. Jefferson, *Things Fundamental*.

does not answer all the questions we may choose to ask; but He gives us light by which it is possible for us to walk.

If we are to disbelieve in the spiritual world because it is filled with mystery, what are we to say of the mysteries which face us on this earth—inexplicable yet undeniable? The conception of God is not more mysterious than the thought that a grain of sand may be divided a million times, and yet be no nearer its ultimate division than it is now. Time and space are full of mystery. A man under chloroform has been known to pass many hours of sensation in a few minutes. Time is made an objective measure of things, and yet its phenomena are so subjective that Kant conceived it to have no real existence.¹

4. Had there been no Pentecost, there would have been no Christian Church. Men sometimes say that there are two great days in the Christian year—Christmas and Easter—the day that commemorates the birth of Jesus, and the day that commemorates His rising from the tomb. Those are great days, to be sure; but they do not exhaust the list, there is another day as great as either, and without which the first two would amount to little. There are three great days in the Christian year: Christmas, Easter, Whitsunday, and we are not true to our faith when we allow Whitsunday to fall into the background.

It is only by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that the Christian life becomes possible to any one of us. We are not made Christians by ideas, but by the Spirit who dwells within us.

I believe in Thee!

Life's Lord, Life's Giver,
For aye and ever.

Source and Fountain of boundless sanctity,
Pouring high sapience and wisdom royally
Down on Thy suppliant people, the blest, the free:
Thou who art fain to hallow all men, oh, hallow me,
My God, I believe in Thee.²

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Prayer in Spirit.

'Pray without ceasing.'—1 Th 5¹⁷.

If we would pray without ceasing, it must be in the spirit, and not in words; and if we consider what is the essential spirit of prayer, we may be more disposed to admit the reasonableness of the apostolic precept.

1. Self-consecration to God is the inmost

¹ Tennyson and his Friends, 235.

² E. Hickey, 'An Act of Faith,' *Later Poems*, 52.

characteristic of true prayer. It is an offering up of the heart, with all its desires and affections, to Him who is its rightful Lord. Without this our imploring words are only a deceitful semblance, and it would be better to keep our tongues for ever silent than to besiege heaven with our short-sighted and selfish petitions. Prayer indeed, as the expression of a desire, naturally assumes the form of petition; but if it be genuine, every request is accompanied by the condition, either expressed or implied, that it be agreeable to God's wisdom and love to grant it. 'Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,' expresses the substance of all real prayer.

2. Again, trust is a characteristic of true prayer. That we offer prayer at all is dependent on our conviction that there is One who is both able and willing to give us what we need. If we were atheists, we could not pray; and each prayer that breaks involuntarily from the lips is a protest of nature against every atheistic scheme. Nor could we approach God with the language of supplication if, while we admitted His existence, we believed that He had no regard for individual welfare, and that our most earnest pleadings would pass unheeded away. Nor again, if we only dreaded God's sovereign power, and sought by our entreaties to secure His favour, could we offer the prayer of self-consecration; for we can consecrate ourselves only to One whom we believe to be infinitely good and holy. Nothing short of the Christian's faith in a Heavenly Father can justify the Christian's prayer; and if that faith be feeble and uncertain in our hearts, our words will be cold and languid. The fervent, heartfelt prayer which is acceptable to God is full of childlike trust.

3. Once more, true prayer is characterized by humility. He only who is conscious of need, and feels his dependence on a higher Power, approaches God in prayer. As long as we are sufficient for ourselves we may use the prescribed form, and draw nigh to God with our lips, but our hearts will be far from Him. It is when earth no longer satisfies, when aspiration sighs for an ideal good, or the shame of conscious weakness or guilt enters our souls, that we utter the prayer which pierces to the audience-chamber of God. If we are so vain and presumptuous as to think that we need Him not, but can live by our own light and strength, our pharisaical offering will drop back like lead into our own bosoms. We must feel our depend-

ence upon God, our infinite need of His blessing, and that all wisdom, power, and love are His gifts, before we can address Him in the accents of sincere prayer, and present to Him all the wealth of a son's devotion.

We need the control of prayer in the hour of relaxation and pleasure, that nothing may be done in excess, nothing unworthy, but the true end of pleasure may be secured, the possession of a healthier and gladder mind. How many would be saved from making shipwreck of their character if they sought no pleasure on which the blessing of God was not secretly implored. And let it not be said that thus enjoyment would become stiff and unnatural. On the contrary, it would assume a spontaneous grace, and fill the heart with delight a thousandfold. What mirth so keen and genuine as that of a happy child? And has God no smile for the merry gambols and laughter of childhood? If the thought of God will not blend with our amusements, they are not innocent, and we must

flee from them. To pray without ceasing is our only safeguard here.

The same is true of the more serious engagements of our life's business. Here, too, the prayerful spirit should be ever present. How prone we are to view our profession, whatever it may be, as the means of self-aggrandizement, and not as a trust committed to us by God, to be carried on in strict conformity with His will. Hence arises, even among men otherwise good, a laxity of practice on which they themselves cannot think with complacency, and which they excuse rather than justify. The delicate sense of honour is lost, and self-interest steps into the place of duty. Let our warehouses, our shops, our studies become temples, not indeed for the offering of formal worship, but for that noiseless communion and that trustful self-surrender which alone can impart to life its true dignity and value, and mingle unseen in all our pursuits.¹

¹ J. Drummond, *Pauline Meditations*.

The Samaritans.²

BY THE REVEREND A. R. S. KENNEDY, D.D., PROFESSOR OF HEBREW AND SEMITIC LANGUAGES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

DR. THOMSON'S interest in the Samaritans is of long standing (see THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, vol. xi. 375 ff.). 'The present work,' to quote from the preface, 'represents the results of independent study pursued somewhat intermittently for nearly thirty years, and in circumstances more favourable to acquiring information than are possessed by many. A somewhat lengthened residence in Palestine, repeated visits to Nablus, and presence at the celebration of the Samaritan Passover, vitalized to the writer ideas derived by him from other sources.' The result is this full and sympathetic presentation of the history, literature, and religious beliefs and practices of the Samaritans from the earliest times down to the

present day. By this substantial addition to the scanty literature of the subject in English, Dr. Thomson has earned the gratitude of all who are interested not only in the present pathetic remnant of a once numerous race, but in such wider questions as the claim of the older Samaritans to represent the ancient 'house of Joseph,' with rites and beliefs that are possibly a direct inheritance from the priests and prophets of North Israel, and, not least, the literary and textual problems presented by the Samaritan recension of the Pentateuch.

In the opening chapters Dr. Thomson gives an excellent sketch of the history of the Samaritan community, while chapter v., 'The Ritual of Samaritan Worship,' and chapter vii., 'The Theology of the Samaritans,' are perhaps the most valuable in the whole work. In the former chapter will be found a graphic description of that most interesting survival from a remote antiquity, the celebration of the Passover on

² *The Samaritans: Their Testimony to the Religion of Israel*. Being the Alexander Robertson Lectures, delivered before the University of Glasgow in 1916, by the Rev. J. E. H. Thomson, D.D., Author of *Books which influenced the Lord and His Apostles* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd. Price 16s.).